



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Indictment

Defendant: Salah Rashem, et al

**U. S. and CANADIAN LAW ENFORCEMENT
TAKE DOWN ALIEN SMUGGLING ORGANIZATION**

A Federal Grand Jury indictment was unsealed today in Detroit against fourteen individuals on charges of Conspiracy to Smuggle Illegal Aliens into the United States and to Harbor and Transport Illegal Aliens Within the United States. The indictment was returned on February 9, 2006 and placed under seal pending the execution of arrest warrants today. Two criminal complaints were also unsealed today. Each of the defendants was arrested or surrendered earlier today in a joint U.S./Canadian take down of the alien smuggling organization, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today. One of the defendants, Salah Rashem, was already in the custody of the U.S. Marshal Service.

Murphy was joined in the announcement by Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Inspectors Glenn Hanna and Blade

Wiese, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Charged in the Indictment were: Salah Rashem, 45, of Rockford, Illinois; Roko Berisic, 31, of Shelby Township, Michigan; Nosh Gojcaj, 35, of Macomb, Michigan; Maitham Aziz Alzehrani, 34, of Windsor, Ontario; Kola Bajraktari, 34, of Windsor, Ontario; Fran Gashaj, 40, of Windsor, Ontario; Han Huang, 43, of Albion, Michigan; Hoa Ly, 42, of Macomb, Michigan; Zef Shpati, 40, of Windsor, Ontario; Dod Martini, 41, of Macomb, Michigan; Kathleen Voneitzen, 48, of Vicksburg, Michigan; Kai Zheng You, 40, of Toronto, Ontario; Duke Bracaj, 36, of Windsor, Ontario; Colin Price, 40, of Windsor, Ontario. The Canadian based defendants will first answer related Canadian charges before facing possible extradition to the United States.

The two criminal complaints charged Duke Lumaj 33, of West Bloomfield, Michigan and Bianca Gagliano, 25, of Windsor, Ontario with related conspiracy charges.

The charges are based upon the interdiction of at least 74 illegal aliens smuggled into the United States by the organization and the more than 2,000 incriminating telephone conversations intercepted by the RCMP during the latter part of 2005. This organization posed a national security threat given the organization's willingness to smuggle anyone into the United States for a price.

"Those who smuggle human beings across international borders should realize that they will be met with an international united front of law enforcement agencies dedicated to stopping them cold and putting them in jail. This is a great example of U.S. Canadian joint criminal enforcement that should be a warning to all human traffickers," said United States

Attorney Murphy.

“Alien smuggling organizations are driven by greed with little regard to the health, well being, dignity, or motivation of their human cargo,” said Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Detroit. “Attacking and dismantling these criminal groups is critical to securing our borders and ensuring compliance with our immigration and customs laws. Smugglers should understand that we will not tolerate nor allow the U.S. Canada border to be used as an opportunity for them to profit from their crimes - rather we will use our shared border as an opportunity for our nations to work together to bring them justice.”

Indictments and complaints are only charges and are not evidence of guilty. Every defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

In announcing the indictment, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy commended the work of the Special Agents of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Border Patrol, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) which conducted the investigation. Members of the Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET) were also involved in coordinating this binational effort. The prosecution is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Kenneth R. Chadwell.

Copies of the indictment and complaints may be obtained from the U.S. Attorney's Office.